

# Under Fire

By RICHARD PARKER

Based on the drama of  
ROD COOPER MEGRE

Author of "Under Cover" and co-author  
of "It Pays to Advertise"

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CHAPTER XXII—Continued.

Streetman was already asking headquarters to connect him with General French or one of his staff, when the approaching form gained the English trench. The man climbed up the face of the earth embankment, and shouting, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot! I'm not German—I'm Irish!" he peered down at the alert faces turned up to his.

It was Larry Redmond—that disheveled man who clung to the top of the bombproof shelter. He was still in the German uniform, but without hat or coat, which he had cast aside, while he ran, for greater safety when he should reach his goal. He had no desire to stop a bullet intended for a German. And that uniform was damning.

"Stay where you are!" Montague called to him. "Boys, if he moves, fire!" he told his men.

"I'm Redmond!" Captain Redmond of the Irish Guards. Larry cried. "I've been on special service inside their lines, and they don't shoot at me. By their maps this is Trench 27, isn't it?"

"You'll have to do a lot of explaining," Montague told him.

"Tell me—has anyone been here—someone you don't know—a assassin—honor off perhaps for a Britisher, bringing you some news—some word?"

"Some word of what?" Captain Montague asked.

"I don't know—I can't make out," Larry shouted desperately. "But there's a fellow ahead for Trench 27. I've seen their maps, and one of their spies—"

He paused as Streetman's voice caught his attention. The disguised German spy had at last succeeded in getting someone in authority to receive his message. And now he was divulging his false information.

"Who's that speaking?" Larry asked the English captain sharply. And immediately he answered his own question. "It's Streetman, captain! I know him. He's a German spy! Don't let him talk!"

In his eagerness to stop that disastrous message he forgot the warning that Montague had given him, and the wild-eyed Irishman rose to his feet.

The British fired pointblank at him. But Larry sensed his danger just in time. He dropped flat upon his face on the top of the bombproof and the bullets whistled over him.

Captain Montague was impressed with Larry's news, and he ordered Streetman to put down the telephone. He thought the matter worth further investigation.

"Streetman, don't you remember me?" Larry asked the man at the telephone.

But here Streetman's iron nerve did not desert him even then.

"By God! It's Captain Karl of the German army! And in our very trenches!" he exclaimed. "He's the man whose plane I overheard!"

"That's a pretty good bluff, captain! I don't let him talk!" Larry cautioned the English officer. "Keep that telephone!" he shouted, as Streetman resumed his conversation with headquarters. And as a last resort Captain Redmond shot the instrument from the spy's grasp. Then, under cover of the hubbub Larry leaped inside the trench.

"D—n you, Redmond!" Streetman swore. For the moment his hatred betrayed him.

"Redmond!" Larry repeated joyfully. "You hear, captain? He knows who I really am! He called me Redmond!" And as Streetman edged nearer the outlet to the trench the Irishman cried, "Don't let him get away, sergeant!"

Several men grabbed Streetman then.

"Captain—here's my revolver!" Larry held his weapon out to Montague. "Put me under arrest till you investigate," he said.

"Thank you, Redmond!" the enlightened Montague replied. He was vastly relieved. "You've done us a great service, and he nearly fooled us."

My God—he nearly fooled us!" he repeated, as he realized the disaster that Larry had so narrowly averted. "Now he'll pay for it!" he cried. "Sergeant—stand that man against the trench!"

"Boys!"

"Don't shoot me like that! I tell you I'm innocent!" Streetman was begging for his life now.

But even had Montague been disposed to spare him, his doom was sealed. An enemy airplane had darted out above their lines. One of the British privates spied it when it was almost above them, and as they paused to watch it the plane slowed visibly.

"That means she'll drop a bomb," a Tommy observed.

"Sure—they never hit anything," Captain Redmond jeered.

But this time Larry was mistaken.

As he spoke, something came hurtling down to earth.

"Look out, boys! For God's sake keep back his involuntary death!" Captain Montague could not keep back his involuntary death.

At that moment there was a tremendous explosion. Trench 27 rocked with it. The bombproof shelter of it was made of cardboard, and it fell beneath it. The heaped dirt at the top of the trench was shattered like so much sawdust.

There was no longer any light in that little inferno except what came from the starlit heavens. Men—or what had once been men—lay motionless where the powerful explosive had flung them. Others had vanished as if into thin air—never to return. And for a few brief moments all was silent.

Then someone stirred in the shambles. It was Captain Montague. One of the timbers from the roof of the shattered bombproof had fallen upon his left leg; and, weak as he was from his injuries, he could not release it.

"Boys, take that beam off my leg!" he called faintly. "I can't move! Take it off, I tell you!" He called several of his men by name. But no one answered. He groaned then, as he struggled to rise, and fell back fainting.

The telephone buzzer began to call insistently. And there was one man who heard it. Larry had been stunned for a few seconds. How he might be wounded he had not the slightest idea. But that he was hurt he had not the slightest doubt. He could barely move, as consciousness returned to him. But until the call of the telephone roused him further he had been content to lie where he fell—and rest. That signal, however, spurred him to dogged effort.

"The telephone! It isn't smashed!" he cried. "Oh, God! Let me get to that telephone! If they attack us now we're done for!" He dragged himself along the littered floor of the trench for a few feet, then sank down with a groan. "Oh, my God! My leg!" he moaned. And then he drifted into a lethargy. His mind wandered back to Ethel Willoughby. And once more he found himself in Sir George Wagstaff's house in London, pleading with her to marry him.

Soon he gained control of his befuddled brain again. "I've got to get to that telephone!" he told himself desperately. "Come on, Larry! You can do it!" he told himself fervently. "D—n your Irish heart! Come on! It's only five feet more!"

So his undaunted spirit lashed his broken body to its holding.

At last he gained the phone. At the other end headquarters was still trying feebly to learn the rest of that interrupted message that the German spy had started to relate.

"No, no! I'm not Lee! I'm Redmond!" he gasped. "Captain Redmond of the Irish Guards! Special service!"

Major Drayton, you remember me?" Larry said almost joyfully, as he discovered to whom he was speaking. "Patient French aeroplane—Trench 27"

At the sound of that order one of the men lying upon the floor raised himself upon an elbow and listened.

"I tell you—retreat! Retreat!" he cried. "Right to the very gates of Paris! . . . Oh, Ethel—where are you?"

"Who's that?" Doctor Aubrey asked of one of his Red Cross assistants.

"Captain Redmond! He goes on like that most of the time!" the man answered.

"The telephone! I've got to get to that telephone!" Larry shouted. "Come on, Larry! You can do it! It's only a few feet more!"

The doctor speeded beside him.

"There, there, old man! Take it easy!" he said. "It was plain to him that the wounded man was living over again those tense and terrible moments in the trench."

All at once a dazed look came over Captain Redmond's face. He looked at the doctor curiously.

"What place is this? Who are you?" he asked. He had at last regained his senses.

"You're at an English field hospital," the doctor said.

"Then they got me, didn't they?" said Larry. "Did I telephone headquarters in time? I can't remember. There was a bomb. I tried to crawl to the phone. . . . Was I too late? Tell me!"

"Your information came in time to prevent their flanking our whole army," Doctor Aubrey told him.

"Thank God!" Larry murmured. "And Miss Willoughby? She was at Tourville? Where is she?"

No, no! You wouldn't know," he said, as the doctor shook his head. "And Strassman? He didn't get away?"

"Strassman? You mean the German spy who was with you in Trench 27?"

"Yes, yes!" Larry said eagerly.

"Their bomb got him," said the doctor. "He's dead."

"That's one good shot they made," Captain Redmond replied. "Tell me—we've turned them back? We've saved Paris?"

"I fear not," the other said, and his grave face revealed the anxiety that he shared with all his fellows. "We're only ten miles from Paris now. We've been retreating for over a week."

"But that was part of the plan!" the wounded man cried. "To retreat, and then—"

"I know," the medical man interrupted. "But we haven't been able to cut their lines. Even the government has been moved to Bordeaux. The German's aren't five miles from here. Last night they shelled this church. They're four to one. I'm afraid we're done for."

Larry grasped at the arm of the man who knelt beside him.

"Don't say that!" he begged. "It

can't be. They can't take Paris. They can't. Dear God, I beg thee—"

"There, there! Rest a bit, old man! You got a nasty smash in the head. Lie back!" And he lowered the captain back upon the straw once more.

"Out there they're fighting while I'm no good to anyone," Larry groaned.

"Doctor! This lady wishes to see you."

Doctor Aubrey turned as the Red Cross man spoke; and his glance encountered a girl—an English girl, dressed in a suit once white, but now torn and bedraggled. Her hair was disheveled, and her face showed pale and wan in the half-light of the dim church.

"She has a pass from General French's headquarters," the man added.

"May I be of service?" the doctor asked her.

Ethel stepped forward then.

"For ten days I've been searching for various field hospitals," she told him. "This is my last chance. Tell me—oh, I'm afraid! I'm afraid to ask!"

She nervously herself by a visible effort. "Tell me—is Captain—"

As she faltered there came a quick cry from the man the doctor had just left.

"Ethel! Larry's call electrified them. She hurried to him.

"Oh, my dear!" she answered with a dry sob.

"My darling! My darling! You're safe—you're not hurt!" he exclaimed, as she put her arms about him with immense tenderness.

"No, no! And I'm here with you, thank God!"

"Tell me—what news from the front?" he demanded, as a roll of cannonading filled the church with its resonant booming.

"Oh, I can't tell you," she said. "It's too dreadful! But she saw that he craved the truth, even though it were the worst. "We're still retreating. They say—Paris is lost!"

The notes of a bugle again sounded clear through the roar of the great guns.

"Oh, dear God, they mustn't take Paris!" Larry cried. "If we can keep Paris, we've a fighting chance." He stopped abruptly then, and turned his head as if at some wondrous sound. "Listen to the bugles!" he shouted. "They're not playing retreat! That's the call to attack! . . . What does it mean?"

A messenger burst into the church. "What's in charge here?" he demanded.

"I am," Aubrey told him.

"I'm from headquarters," the man said. "Is Captain Lawrence Redmond here?"

"Yes, yes! I'm here!" Larry called, struggling to his feet with Ethel's help.

The messenger crossed to where the wounded man stood, half supported by the girl.

"I have the honor to report," he announced, "that General French and General Joffre extend to you their grateful thanks for your information, and to state that you have been mentioned in the dispatches for signal bravery in the cause of the allies."

"Oh, my dear—and you said 'For King and Country'!" Ethel exclaimed, her heart near to bursting with pride in him.

"What do I matter?" he chided her. "When out there they are driving us back! Hear their guns!" The little structure that sheltered them shook from cellar to rafters under the vibration of the terrific fire.

"One moment!" said the messenger. "I have to add, sir, that your information, coming at a vital time, has enabled the English troops, in conjunction with the French, to execute a turning movement. And after a four-day battle the enemy is now in retreat beyond the Marne."

Larry seemed not to grasp the news. He looked dully at the man from headquarters.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"The enemy is in retreat."

"But they said we were beaten," Larry stammered.

"I'm just in from the front," the messenger informed him. "I tell you, the enemy is in retreat."

"And Paris? Paris is safe?" Larry cried, as the joy of it all broke over him.

"Paris is safe," was the answer.

A hand was playing now, and those glad folk in the little church could hear the thunder of marching feet.

"You hear?" the messenger asked. "That's the French. The reserves are coming up from Paris."

"That's the English troops!" Larry shouted, as he recognized a familiar marching air.

"Yes! They landed today," the man said.

Larry stood there listening to the welcome strains. One arm he had flung about Ethel. And the other he waved above his bandaged head.

"More of our boys off to the front!" he exclaimed. "And do you mind what they're playing, my darling?" he asked her. It was "Tipperary."

The wounded men caught up the song.

Captain Redmond smiled happily as the soldiers shouted the words; and as they reached a certain passage of the chorus he looked down at Ethel with a world of tenderness in his eyes and held her closer.

The English Tommies were singing, "The sweetest girl I know!"

THE END.

Zoological Moment.

Nephew—"I tried to get a raise today, aunt, but the boss refused it."

Mrs. Blunderb—"Too bad, Dicky. Perhaps you didn't approach him at the zoological moment."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The Sweetest Girl I Know."

For almost ten days Larry Redmond had lain, delirious, in a little church

in France, not many miles from Paris. It was only the wreck of a church now, for the German shells had swept it, leaving ruin in their wake. Even the statue of Christ on the Cross which surmounted the altar had not escaped desecration, for the upper part of the crucifix had been snapped off like matchwood and now rested against the lower part of the figure of the Savior.

Reinforcements had reached Trench 27 in time—thanks to Larry's heroism, and though he knew nothing of what had happened after he had fallen close by the telephone, the British troops had stemmed the gap in their defenses.

Along with others of the injured, Captain Redmond had been hurried away from the front as fast as was possible, until at last he had been revealed into the field station for the English wounded for which purpose the Red Cross had pressed that tiny church into service. When Larry reached that place it had been far to the rear of the British first line. But now, alas! those heroes in khaki had been forced back until the boom of their guns was plainly audible in the violated sanctuary.

Captain Redmond lay upon a heap of straw on the floor. About him were many other men, swathed in bandages, as he was, and among them there moved a soldier with the Red Cross insignia upon his arm; and a French priest knelt beside the stricken and prayed for the welfare of their souls as well as their bodies. It was early morning, three or four hours past mid night, and the chattered nave was only dimly lighted by a few lanterns.

A doctor strode through the doorway.

"I want to see Doctor Charles," he announced, and to the man who rose from one of the altar steps, where he had been examining charts of the wounded, he explained that he was Doctor Aubrey of the Second corps sent to relieve the medical officer stationed there, who had been ordered to join the ambulance forces at the front.

Doctor Charles handed over his charts at once and prepared to leave.

"I see Captain Redmond is still here," Aubrey remarked as he scanned the records. "How is he?"

"Still out of his head."

"Will he pull through?"

"He ought to."

"Brave chap, wasn't he?" said Doctor Aubrey. "To get us that information about Von Kluck's flanking movement!"

"If it hadn't been for Redmond, the world have captured our entire army," the departing surgeon replied.

"Pretty big things for one man to do!" the newcomer exclaimed.

Doctor Charles agreed with him, and after saying a hurried good-by he pressed on into the gray of the approaching dawn.

As Aubrey set about his duties, it seemed to him that the roar of the artillery became increasingly distinct. And it was not long before the blast of a huge sounding retreat was wafted unmistakably through the open doors.

At the sound of that order one of the men lying upon the floor raised himself upon an elbow and listened.

"I tell you—retreat! Retreat!" he cried. "Right to the very gates of Paris! . . . Oh, Ethel—where are you?"

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